

Lone Wolf

by Unravelling

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Summary: He has been alone all his life. Solitary. A lone wolf. Aboard the Long Night of Solace, Noble Six opts to remain behind to activate the slipspace bomb. AU

Lone Wolf

He hits the ground hard as radiant plasma gouges great chunks from the bulkhead he's crouched behind, yanking the near-empty clip out and taking a moment to breathe.

_Two friendlies, five hostiles. Elites, white armour, shiel-****Tier 6 units.****

_Ah. _

"Great," he mutters, rising and bringing the sniper to bear before loosing a shot at the nearest alien. The responding rain of light is uncontrolled, boiling the air over him as he ducks away, shields flickering. A confirmation. His lips twitch up in a tight half-smile but a piercing scream yanks his attention away and he turns in time to see the last marine fall, his face a melted mess of blood and pus.

Plasma burn, shallow, slow death.

****Recommend prompt euthanasia.****

He pauses for but a split-second before drawing his sidearm, aiming and pulling the trigger, splattering red over incandescent violet. The screaming stops.

Burying the twinge of emotion that sparks in his chest, he slips out a frag.

A twist. A click. An underhanded throw, almost lazy. A silent nod to the mangled corpse before him.

This one's for you.

****Mark.****

He slips fluidly from cover as the grenade detonates, muffling the deafening crack of his rifle. From the corner of his eyes, he sees Jorge leaping over the barrier and smashing the obtuse barrel of his machine gun through shields, flesh and bone.

****Two hostiles remaining.****

But as he lines his sights on the next alien, his motion sensor flickers again, pinging a hostile unit just behi-

Then he's spinning to the left, hand whipping up to grasp his knife when the white-hot fire lances into his side, carving through the titanium shell of his armour with frightening ease. Biting back the pain â€" _just a flesh wound â€" _the Spartan lashes out with a violent flurry of blows that pushes back his newest assailant. A sweeping kick to the pivot of its leg sends the alien crashing heavily to the ground.

As his carbon steel blade plunges towards his quarry's unarmoured neck, he barely registers Jorge's frantic shout â€" _"Six!" â€" _ before something erupts at his back. The shockwave hurls him â€" all one thousand pounds â€" into the hangar wall, the purple metal buckling under the weight. Head ringing and wounds freshly torn by the blow, the Spartan's groggily open to the sight of an alien towering over him, plasma dagger humming dangerously amidst the din of the closing firefight.

****Armour permutations suggest this is a Special Operations unit equipped with advanced stealth training and technology.****

Fine time for a lesso-

The Elite lunges, its wrist mounted blade of stabilised plasma arcing down towards his heart.

* * *

><p>Jorge is shaking the little purple bits of alien brain from his gun when his sensors mark something lurking around the kid. Even before the first syllables can leave his lips, though, Six is dancing away from the ambushing Elite, knife in hand, fists flashing impossibly fast.<p>

Jorge spares a moment to ponder Six's impressive speed, even for a Spartan, before the last two Elites pop back up to take pot shots at his distracted teammate. A quick burst of lead forces them back down but a glance at his counter confirms his nagging worry.

Low on ammo.

On queue the nearest Elite vaults over its cover, plasma grenade primed in hand. Jorge's first salvo bounces uselessly off its flickering shields, but the following onslaught cuts straight through, riddling the alien with savage punctures. Even as the ragdoll body of his foe hits the ground, the Spartan tracks the

burning blue globe through the air, haphazardly thrown in the damn thing's death throes.

What feels like an eternity of sluggish flight passes in an instant and the ball of plasma burns itself into one of the Pelican's wings. Right next to the engines.

This time, the word bursts from his throat before his mind can catch up.

"SIX!"

And then his visor dampens the brilliant flare of the explosion and the furious roar to a dull _thump_. When his visor depolarizes, he looks upon the grim scene of destruction, weathered brow creasing into a grim frown. The wing and a sizeable chunk of the dropships hull are simply gone, vaporized in the superheated combustion and what is left has toppled over, the weakened structure slowly buckling under its own weight.

Squinting through the burning wreckage on the other side he catches a glimpse of dark grey armour. A silver faceplate reflecting the flickering flames and shadows.

Six is slumped against the wall. The Elite stands over him.

Damn it.

Two steps into the stretch something slides into view to his far left and Jorge whirls around as the first bolt of charged plasma depletes his shield and the second glances off his neck-guard, a trail of bright sparks in its wake. Three bullets roar a response from his own barrel and thenâ€¦nothing.

Click. Click. Like a neon traffic sign at night, the counter in the corner of his HUD flashes a big red zero.

For a moment, Jorge is frozen at the incredulity of it all before the Elite, noticing the distinct lack of bullets ducks out of cover again. So he does the first thing that comes to mind.

And hurls his two hundred pound machine gun as hard as he can. It slows only marginally before bursting through the shields and caving in the alien's chest, snapping ribs like dry twigs. The thing sprawls back loosing a roar of anger and pain. It's still scrabbling for something at its waist, still roaring when Jorge's titanium boot punches down like an old car piston.

His foot comes free with a wet squelch and he grabs the discarded plasma pistol, slick with fresh alien blood as it is, before swiftly crossing to Six's side of the hangar.

The older Spartan is prepared for a lot of things. Prepared to see another dead teammate, slashed at the throat or impaled through the heart, for one.

Instead he finds Six sitting comfortably â€" or as comfortably as one sits with a 3-inch plasma cut in their side â€" cleaning his knife beside the mutilated corpse of a dead elite.

There is blood everywhere.

Jorge looks at the other Spartan for a long moment, certain that the kid can imagine the inquisitively raised eyebrow behind his visor. The reflective silver tilts up to meet his gaze with a long, blank stare.

"Karma."

The word slips out casually, like they were sitting in a mess rather than the corpse strewn hangar of a Covenant corvette. The big Spartan snorts, extending a gauntleted hand.

"Aye."

* * *

><p>"Seventy-six seconds to endpoint."

It's impossible for him to miss the obnoxious beep the timer makes every time Jorge fiddles with it. Or the other Spartan's cursing, for that matter, even from his spot slumped against the bay wall.

He looks out onto Reach, its vibrant vistas of blues and greens scorched dark by the fires of the Covenant and feels more peaceful than he ever as.

Strange.

When they'd handed the dossier to him and sent him packing, he'd wondered if he would walk away from this latest assignment alone yet again. He always did.

The bitter laugh rattles out into the emptiness of the hangar bay.

Well, no surprises there, but this timeâ€¦|_this time_, he would be the one to stay behind. A welcome change.

Heavy footsteps pull him from his thoughts and he looks up into the grim set of the older Spartan's shoulders.

"Well I've got good newsâ€¦|and bad news. As you might remember, our bird's missing a wing and half its bloody hull. The only way off this slagheap isâ€¦|gravity."

He pulls himself up, ignoring the faint biting pain of shifting biofoam and faces the taller man, all too aware of the circumstances.

"And the bad news?"

"You're a sharp one, aren't you?"

A blithe shrug is the response â€" as a _Spartan_, it went without saying â€" and Jorge shakes his head, a little forlornly.

"Well, the bad news is the timer's busted. I'll have to fire it manually."

He shuts his eyes as the words settle into silence like a weight settling around his shoulders.

It is a confirmation.

A_ sentence_.

"No."

What? He can almost hear that one word echoing around Jorge's tempered skull.

"I'll do it."

"**At current velocity, fifty-three seconds to endpoint.**"

Dot's synthesised voice cuts in as Jorge stiffens. He can imagine the defiance in the older man's gaze.

No, he probably wants to say, ever so ready to throw away his life. But inside, Jorge has to know the truth of the situation.

His gaze slides down to the scorched line burned through his suit and he knows that the chances of surviving the jump are near-zero.

Jorge â€" a man who had fought this war since before he'd been born, seen countless more atrocities than he had â€" could not have possibly missed it.

The seal hisses and clicks as he pulls his helmet off and stares into his own stretched reflection.

The face that gazes back at him is young; almost boyish features marred only by the single scar etched across one pale cheek.

It feels like an eternity before his thoughts catch up and he glances down.

"My suit's done and I know it. You know it as well, old man. One of us isn't getting off this shipâ€" and it's going be me."

He watches Jorge's hands ball into tight fists. As the older man stewes over it, a bitter smile twists his lips.

"Lighten up Jorge. Remember? Spartan's never die."

Here the big man freezes and then his hand is pulling at his helmet, unmasking himself with a hiss of depressurized air. Cloudy, steel-grey eyes meet his stare and one hand clasps his shoulder as the other rips the dog tag from his neck.

"We're just missing in action."

Then the tension vanishes from the larger man's frame and his head bobs in a sharp nod.

"It's been an honourâ€" Jorge's rumbling voice pauses here, uncertain how to continue.

"The name's Ezekiel, old man. Name a moa after me when you get that

farm and I'll call it even."

For a moment, all the years â€" _a lifetime â€" _ of Spartan training fall away and they both burst out into booming, echoing laughter. Then Jorge's helmet slips back on and it's back to business.

* * *

><p>"Twenty-five seconds to endpoint."

Jorge nods to the boy â€" _because that is what he looks like_ â€" and steps forward.

A hand clamps down on his shoulder. The boy â€" _no,_ Jorge thinks, _Ezekiel_ â€" smiles at him again, a weary, resigned thing, and speaks.

"Tell them to make it count."

One final grunted affirmation and he's off, falling into Reach's embrace.

Away from the ship, and another man â€" _because that is what he ****is****_ â€" about to sacrifice his life for this war.

Noble Six. Ezekiel. A good soldier. A good Spartan.

A good man.

And as the brilliant slipspace rupture guts the Covenant ship, Jorge closes his eyes with a whisper to those gone by.

"_Mi mindig emlÃ©kezni, testvÃ©r."_

We will always remember, brother.

* * *

><p>Those last few moments pass in a blur of motion and then Jorge is stepping away. Falling away to the relative safety of a planet under fire.<p>

As he walks to the slipspace engine, his wounds flashing sharp pain with every step, he can't help but grin.

As he waits there for the end, he leans against the silver metal of the engine and finds himself wondering.

He wonders if two and a half centuries ago, Shaw and Fujikawa had ever imagined their revolutionary invention would be used as a makeshift bomb against a genocidal alien theocracy.

He wonders what the commander will think when he gets word of this.

And he wonders if the many that had given their lives for his all these years had ever imagined an ending like this.

He laughs, grim and weary, but laugh he does.

The helmet slips back on and his eyes drift shut as the last wisps of his voice float away, swallowed in the omnipresent hum of the nearing supercarrier.

Jorge is gone. Dot is gone. The connection is severed. He is alone again.

He smiles a broken smile nobody will ever see.

Guess I never really left that lone wolf stuff behind.

He's still smiling when his hand presses down on the activation pad and his world vanishes in the blinding light.

End
file.